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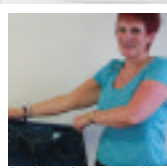
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'BEDROOM TAX' LOOMS

ONE in five North Oxfordshire social housing tenants will be affected by a controversial "bedroom tax", figures obtained by the Banbury Cake show.

Some 907 people would get a cut of up to 25 per cent in housing benefit, out of 4,692 Cherwell tenants.

By Oliver Evans

Working-age people deemed to have "extra, unused bedrooms" would lose cash under the new rules, due to be introduced across the UK from April 1.

A Conservative housing boss said the change would see many tenants moving to smaller homes, freeing up houses for families.

The council – which pays out the benefit – said 706 people would lose 14 per cent of their benefit, as they have one "extra" bedroom.

A further 166 would lose 25 per cent, as they have two or more "extra" bedrooms.

Housing benefit is paid to people on a low income and covers part or all of their rent, depending on their income and circumstances.

Cherwell District Council's Debbie Pickford said: "We have a lot of families waiting for three-bedroom houses and lots of single people living in them."

The lead member for housing said of those affected: "It will be beneficial to them because it will be a place they can afford to live in."

"They can do a couple of hours extra work a week or they can move somewhere smaller."

Banbury's Conservative MP, Sir Tony Baldry, said the UK's housing benefit bill had doubled under Labour control and reform was needed.

Social housing claimants rose from 4,032 in 2007/08 to 4,692 now, taking the district bill from £14.4m to £19.4m.

Sir Tony said: "The reduction in housing benefit for those with spare bedrooms goes some way in redressing the balance, so that the social housing stock is used as evenly as it can be."

Some 4,000 people are on the council's waiting list, but the authority is to take off

2,800 who have no "realistic" chance of getting a home.

Council Labour group leader Sean Woodcock said the change would make "little if any difference to the availability of affordable housing".

He said: "These are people's homes and it is likely that many will just be unable to move for a variety of very good reasons."

"All that will be achieved is that households, including those where someone may have a disability, find it even more difficult to make ends meet."

A Department for Work and Pensions spokesman said the council had got £203,354 from a £155m fund to help those affected.

She said: "Every household has to decide whether or not they can afford to have a spare bedroom. Families on benefits should be no different."

"The Government simply cannot afford to pay for extra rooms."

The changes do not include OAPs or a disabled tenant or partner who needs an extra room for carers.

Same-sex children under 16 will be expected to share bedrooms and children under ten are expected to share, regardless of gender.



Cherwell's Debbie Pickford



MP Sir Tony Baldry

New rules could lead to families living in rented houses losing part of their benefits



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InBRIEF**Ready to cut the ribbon****TELEVISION**

presenter Laurence Llewelyn Bowen will reopen a refurbished B&Q in Banbury tomorrow. *The Changing Rooms* star will be at the Southam Road store at 10am.

**Lights plan**

A PLANNING application has been made to put up floodlights around two courts at a Deddington sports complex. Peter Gough has applied to Cherwell District Council for permission for the lights at the Windmill Community Centre And Sports Complex in Hempton Road.

Red palette

AN artist who creates paintings using remote control cars and wheels will kick-off fundraising for Comic Relief at the Banbury Sainsbury's next month. Ian Cook, of PopBangColour – who has appeared on BBC TV's *One Show* – will be at the Oxford Road store on Friday, March 8, and Saturday, March 9.

Charity date

A MEETING is to be held for those interested in fundraising for Guide Dogs. The meeting will be held at Spiceball Leisure Centre, Cherwell Way, Banbury, next Thursday, from 10.30am. For information call Felicity Stratton on 07785 433261.

Plans add up to 900 homes

Site earmarked by council

By Damian Fantato

NEARLY 900 homes may soon be built on land to the north of Banbury.

The major development on either side of Southam Road will see 880 homes built as well as a school, shops and a care home.

Two separate planning applications have been submitted to Cherwell District Council by property development company Pandora Ltd.

On the west side of Southam Road there will be 370 houses, while on the east side there will be 510 plus the school.

Both sites have been earmarked in Cherwell District Council's development strategy for the next 20 years, which will see more than 16,000 homes built by 2031.

The Local Plan, which has not yet been approved by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, earmarks sites for major development around the district over the coming years.

According to the proposed Local Plan, the 43-hectare site south of the M40, on either side of Southam Road, will need to provide a primary school and a community hall.

District councillor Michael Gibbard, the council's planning chief, said: "The district needs housing. And that includes Banbury and Bicester probably taking the greater share of that, as much on sustainability grounds as anything else because the facilities are already there."

"The Local Plan will provide a structured plan for housing and employment in the district and it is an important part of meeting that need."

"We are hoping to submit it to the Secretary of State next month."

The two planning applications have been submitted to Cherwell District Council, which will make a decision on them at a date yet to be set.

Festival feedback 'positive'



LEFT: Sir Ian Blair

BELOW: Actress Jeany Spark, co-director Ed Newell, Sir Ian and writer and film-maker James Runcie discuss 'crime as entertainment'

GOD, the universe and what it's all about were the big issues tackled at a second county "faith fest".

The Bloxham Festival of Faith & Literature was held at Bloxham School from Friday to Sunday.

Speakers included former Metropolitan Police commissioner Sir Ian Blair, who spoke on "crime as entertainment" with writer James Runcie and actress Jeany Spark.

Other talks looked at issues including religion in art, biblical stories and proposed reforms of the press.

Festival director Sarah Meyrick said: "We're really pleased with how the festival went."

"We ended up selling almost 1,700 tickets over the weekend."

"Some people thought they were coming for one event and enjoyed it so much they decided to stay on."

"The feedback from visitors and speakers alike was all really positive."



The Bishop of Oxford, the Rt Rev John Pritchard, said: "It was a super festival."

"The range and quality of the events was excellent, and you could see the enjoyment and stimulation on every face."

On Saturday, Marian Partington, whose sister, Lucy, was murdered by serial killer Fred West, spoke about "forgiveness".

Banbury Conservative MP Sir Tony Baldry spoke about the financial sector and ethics, while Saturday night closed with the Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance and

the North Cotswold Chamber Choir.

Sunday's events included novelist Patrick Gale exploring "goodness and faith" and the programme closed with a *Songs of Praise*-style performance at St Mary's Church by the church and Bloxham School choirs.

The festival – the brainchild of Anglican Sir Tony – was expanded after a successful trial in October 2011.

It was run with support from the Diocese of Oxford, faith festival Greenbelt and the *Church Times*.

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Part-time post office for village

A POST office will return to Cropredy – but only two mornings a week – under new plans.

Views are being sought on the proposal to have a postmaster visit The Red Lion pub on Monday and Wednesday mornings.

The former branch, at gift shop Perfect Present in Williamscoot Road, closed in January 2012.

Easington Post Office has agreed to provide the service at the Red Lion Street pub from 9.30am to 1.30pm, Mondays and Wednesday.

The Post Office said the offer was the "best possible solution". The regional

network manager for the south and east, Mark Lawrence, said: "We are confident that the hosted outreach service will meet the needs of the local community and secure services for the future."

Cropredy Parish Council's Stuart Alexander said: "We would like a permanent location but, at the moment, that doesn't seem to be feasible, so we are happy to get back a service at all."

A six-week consultation period closes on March 28. The service may begin during this time but would not affect the consultation, the firm said.

Agent denies 'pub' link

AN estate agent has said it is no longer involved in controversial discussions about taking over a building that was once an historic Hook Norton pub.

Oxford-based Oliver James was in talks about taking on The Bell but said it was "no longer involved".

A spokesman – who declined to give his name – said: "We have nothing to do with that proposal."

The building's owner, Zoe Fawcett-Shapland, closed the 17th-century pub and has now submitted a planning application for internal changes – to concerns from some residents.

The application seeks listed building consent, so that a ground and second-floor flat could be created and alterations like new heating, courtyard roof and kitchen.

Agent JPCC said

FLASHBACK to August 2011, when regulars protested over plans to turn The Bell, Hook Norton, in to a home



council permission was not needed to change the building's official use, from pub to an estate agent's office, as argued by some residents.

Mrs Fawcett-Shapland was not available for comment.

But Bells Lane resident Peter Millar told the council: "The Bell Inn is an important historic structure and village amenity."

"It has been an inn for more than 300 years and is believed to have been used at times by both Royalist and Parliamentarian forces as a billet during the Civil War. To see it converted would be a travesty."

Council officers said a decision on the scheme could not be made as it had received too little information.

Poor Ofsted report No.2 forces nursery to close



One of the South Central Ambulances answers an emergency call this winter

Action over 999 fleet

HEALTH bosses have said they are bringing down the number of out-of-action ambulances after figures showed a third were off road during the winter period.

South Central Ambulance Service said 18 per cent of its fleet was not in service because of technical problems and maintenance. New figures – from October to January – show 30.9 per cent of the county's ambulances and 18.3 per cent of its response cars were off the road.

For ambulances in Buckinghamshire, 32.9 per cent broke down, with 21.2 per cent in Berkshire and

20.2 per cent in Hampshire.

Trust spokesman Michelle Archer said "For a period of time at the end of last year we were seeing an increased number of vehicles off the road due to various faults.

"We have made improvements to our vehicle maintenance service, which has meant that our vehicle off-the-road rate has now been reduced to 18 per cent."

The service expects 20 to 25 per cent of its fleet to be off the road at any one time, she said. This is "similar at other ambulance trusts".

She said: "We would not anticipate it ever reaching

the zero per cent mark."

The fleet was "complex", she said, and the vehicles were taken off the road for planned maintenance, cleaning and defects, like punctures and radio faults.

Anita Higham, chairman of the Oxfordshire Local Involvement Network, the official NHS watchdog, said: "It does surprise me. I didn't think it would be anywhere near 30 per cent."

The figures follow criticism of SCAS, after it failed to meet response-time targets to get to three-quarters of the most urgent emergencies within eight minutes across large parts of Oxfordshire.

A BANBURY pre-school is to close after 32 years following a second negative Ofsted report.

In January 2012, Hill View Pre-School was judged inadequate by Ofsted and when inspectors returned to the pre-school in Hillview Crescent last month, they again gave the pre-school Ofsted's lowest rating.

The pre-school committee has now confirmed it will close for good on March 29, which it claims is because the Government and Oxfordshire County Council have withdrawn funding.

Committee members Kathryn Moggridge, who has one child at the pre-school, and Claire Boyland, said in a statement: "The huge majority of the parents and staff disagree with the result, as staff worked tirelessly to improve.

"If the setting was seen as inadequate, why wasn't there more support from the local authority?"

"Parents have sent letters to Ofsted and the local authority but don't feel their views have been heard."

They said they believed it would have been better for the pre-school to remain open until the end of the school year in July, to allow continuity of care for the 32 children, aged three to five, who go to the pre-school, and queried whether the closure of the nursery left sufficient funded nursery places within the area.

The pre-school was criticised for weak management, poor systems for assessing and monitoring performance of staff and slow development.

But it was told staff showed they cared about the children, who were settled and secure, and was given a "satisfactory" rating for contribution towards children's well-being.

The pre-school employs five members of staff.

Oxfordshire County Council confirmed it had withdrawn funding from the nursery but said the choice

By Fran Bardsley

to close was made by the nursery, which could have remained open for non-funded places.

A council spokesman said further nursery places were proposed at Hardwick and Arden Pre-school, a grant had been awarded to North Banbury Children's Centre to provide places, while Hanwell Fields Primary and Drayton Pre-school also had spaces.

He said: "Hill View Pre-School's last two Ofsted reports had returned inadequate ratings and the quality of provision there had not improved in the previous 12 months. This was despite extra teaching advisory support and further resources being provided by the county council following the pre-school's first inadequate Ofsted report in January 2012.

"Pre-schools sign agreements with the council which make clear that if they provide sub-standard service over a period of time then the council can withdraw funding for pre-school placements.

"Unfortunately, due to the latest Ofsted report's findings, it has been decided that this will happen at Hill View Pre-School."

Banbury Cake

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County council claims that its repairs team is coping well

Potholes? We are doing our best to repair them

OXFORDSHIRE County Council has defiantly claimed it is on top of pothole repairs amid growing public anger at disintegrating roads.

But it has admitted needing "at least" another £10m on top of what it had put aside to fix the swathes of hollowed out hazards.

Deputy leader of the council Rodney Rose said he felt the repairs team was coping well as ice, floods and snow combined to open chunks of Tarmac.

Despite dozens of pictures and motorists telling tales of crumbling roads, Mr Rose denied the council was failing in its duty as the number of potholes repaired in Oxfordshire had more than trebled in five years.

He said: "If I could, I would completely resurface the roads every ten years. Then we would never see a pothole. But we simply haven't got the money.

By Mark Taylor

"I appreciate that it is an issue that people get angry about, but I think we are doing a good job. In fact I don't believe anyone could do a better job, given the cash we have.

"Our works would compare to anywhere else in the country, considering what we have. I would challenge anyone to find a better standard.

"We would need another £10m on top of what we are spending for structural maintenance.

"We're likely to be spending about £14.5m on the roads over the coming year.

"I think we're doing well, considering the weather we are having.

"It's caused problems the like I have never seen before, with all the wet and the frost.

"There are so many

potholes coming through now, it is all we can do to keep up.

"Water and Tarmac do not get on. So, if you factor in all the rain and then the frost digging in and expanding, it is making the roads crumble. It takes a lot of resurfacing.

"I would urge anyone who sees a pothole to report it to us so we can go out and have a look."

In 2008/09, Oxfordshire County Council repaired 8,902 potholes, but by 2011/12 that number had doubled.

It said by the end of next month it was likely to have repaired about 32,000 defects since April 2012.

But it declined to state how many it had fixed so far this year.

And it did not respond when asked how much of the £14.5m roads budget would be spent solely on repairing roads.

To report a pothole, go to oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/potholes

RIGHT: Just one of the many potholes that have appeared in our roads this winter



Landlord tells of 'drugs factory'

A FORMER antique dealer started a cannabis factory in an old warehouse, a court was told.

Leslie Ballard, of Broughton Road, Banbury, and Birmingham residents Gulam Yousaf and Zafar Iqbal, deny producing the Class-B drug.

On Monday, Oxford Crown Court heard how 87 mature cannabis plants were discovered in tents on the first and second floors of a building in Pepper Alley, Banbury, which Ballard was allegedly renting.

Sandra Beck, prosecuting, said they were found by police, along with fertiliser and hydroponic growing equipment, last April after the building's owner became suspicious of his tenant and went to investigate.

Property developer Peter Henry told the court how he had become worried after Ballard installed a locked door, preventing access to the first floor.

He said the 59-year-old paid his £700 rent in cash, making him suspicious.

Eventually he and his father-in-law went to the property and gained access to the first floor.

He said: "I wanted to get to the bottom of what was going on there.

"When I opened the door I felt a lot of heat. The windows were boarded up, which they never were before, and there were a number of glowing tents."

Mr Henry said he reported the drugs factory to the police, who arrested Ballard, 35-year-old Iqbal and 39-year-old Yousaf, both from Birmingham.

The trial continues.

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Building delays as new marina is 'awash'

A NEW marina in North Oxfordshire has been delayed by severe winter weather that has waterlogged the ground.

The 249-berth Cropredy Marina, north of the village, has been delayed by "a few weeks" and is now expected to open on July 1.

The site sits on dense clay, which has become waterlogged in the heavy rainfall and is taking time to dry out.

Cropredy Marina developer Tim Langer said: "Severe winter weather over the past few months has led to delays in the construction."

"Our contractors have done a brilliant job to get

as far as they have and, despite awful conditions, have managed to keep work going on site until mid-January.

"The main basin is already fully excavated, and the canal entrances have been built.

"However, the ground is now so waterlogged that they have had to suspend operations for a few weeks."

He said customers were receiving regular updates and those affected by the delay would be accommodated at Crick Marina until Cropredy opens.

For more information, visit cropredymarina.com

Idea is tested out at local recycling centre

Rubbish idea of using waste to pay for service



County councillor Hilary Biles at the recycling centre's 'reuse' shop'

OX57184

OXFORDSHIRE County Council has come up with a new scheme to raise money – and it's rubbish.

Councillors want to set up "reuse shops" at its recycling centres – selling second-hand furniture, crockery and toys in the hope the waste dumps will then be able to cover their own running costs.

Council leader Ian Hudspeth said: "We hope to make enough to cover the cost of running the centres. "It would be fantastic if they did."

Last year, the council proposed closing the recycling centres in Stanford-in-the-Vale and Ardley, and replacing them with a £3m superdump in Kidlington as part of a plan to save £750,000.

But the scheme ran into problems over land ownership at the Kidlington site.

In the new reuse shops, people leaving their rubbish won't be paid any money for their donations, and the items will be sold for a small cost.

By Pete Hughes

The council's cabinet member for growth and infrastructure, Hilary Hibbert-Biles, said: "Oxfordshire is currently the best county council in England for recycling and composting, and we want to continue to improve, helping residents to produce less waste and recycling as much as they can."

"With ongoing national pressure on public finances, all councils are having to come up with new ideas to generate income, and if the trial is successful, we will consider using reuse areas to help fund waste management services, as well as providing a new opportunity for visitors to pick up a bargain."

This month, the council's recycling contractor, Weymouth and Sherborne Recycling (W & S), launched a six-month trial of the scheme at its recycling centre in Alkerton.

If the trial goes well, the county council could adopt the scheme

itself and use the income generated to offset some of the costs of running waste management services.

Visitors will be encouraged to donate anything from crockery and collectables to furniture and kitchen equipment, provided it is in good condition.

However, the shop will not be able to sell electrical items during the trial, as the contractor does not have the facility to test them for safety.

Donations can be left by the public in the reuse areas, and they will be priced by W & S staff on site.

The on-site reuse trial will help the council judge the demand for these facilities and provide information as to the amount of material that can be reused through them.

The trials will not cost the council anything to run, as all resources and staffing will be provided by the contractor.

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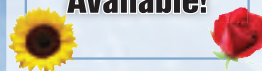
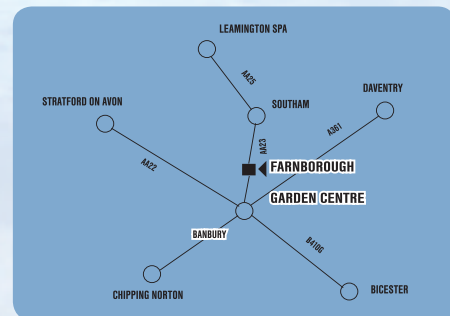
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IN BRIEF

Inspired by TV

GROWING interest in home furnishings has led to a new course at Banbury's Oxford & Cherwell Valley College. The Broughton Road campus is to begin a soft furnishings evening course from April 15 to May 14. It will help people to make a patchwork quilt, blanket or cushion cover. Creative arts curriculum manager Margaret Watkinson said: "We are seeing a renewed interest in making items for the home, inspired by programmes such as *Kirstie's Homemade Home* and the current trend for vintage interiors." For information contact Annie Broe on 01865 551682 or email abroe@ocvc.ac.uk

Real feedback

NOMINATIONS for the Oxfordshire Restaurant Awards close next Thursday. Categories include traditional pub restaurants, gastro pub and brasserie and gastronomic restaurant. Every restaurant entered will be visited by an independent, anonymous reviewer and their feedback will be submitted to a panel of judges. There is also a public vote award, where restaurant fans can vote for their favourite online from Friday, March 1. For more information visit oxfordshirerestaurantawards.co.uk

Midwifery unit report tells us very little, say campaigners

Information lacking on maternity unit

STAFF at Chipping Norton maternity unit were not operating on a "unified and cohesive basis", a report says.

Births at the Midwifery-Led Unit (MLU) are still suspended after an investigation was launched in October last year.

A full review of working practices at the unit is due to be seen by Oxford University Hospitals Trust (OUHT) board members in March.

But an interim report to Oxfordshire's joint health overview and scrutiny committee, by head of midwifery Jane Hervé and planning and information director Andrew Stevens, said nothing was wrong with the rate of recent births transferred to other hospitals.

The report said: "An analysis of recent transfers has shown that these were entirely appropriate and done to ensure the safety of the mother and baby.

"It appears that some staff have recently been more cautious when working in the Cotswold Maternity

By **Freddie Whittaker**
bicester@nqo.com

Unit because of the prevailing culture of the unit; this is related to the fact that the team was not operating in a unified and cohesive basis.

"A number of concerns have been raised by staff who have been on the periphery of the units at Chipping Norton. These relate to the culture and the difficulties this has caused between groups of staff. This will be addressed in the main report."

The OUHT refused to comment further on the findings so far, and said it would wait for the final report before it revealed the content of concerns raised.

The district councillor for Chipping Norton, Annie Roy-Barker, said it was "disgraceful" that residents and patients were being kept in the dark.

She said: "People think it's an awful long time for it to be closed, and we want to see normality restored as



Head of midwifery Jane Hervé

soon as possible.

"People are saying the usual sort of thing people say when they are completely in the dark. People are asking what's going on."

After the suspension of births last year, concerns were raised about the rate at which births were transferred to other units, such as the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford.

At the time, it was revealed the transfer rate was about 45 per cent, but Ms Hervé said it should have been closer to 25 per cent.

Between April 2009 and March 2010, 159 babies were born under the care of the unit. The following year that fell to 92, and during the following year 117 babies were born at the unit.

Between April last year and the suspension in October, 33 babies were born there.

Following the suspension of births at the unit, a claim was made through the "gopetition" website that two midwives had been suspended from the unit after raising concerns about work practices and safety.

The petition, which now has 658 signatures, called for them to be reinstated, but the OUHT has refused to even confirm the suspension or make any comment.

Oxfordshire joint health overview and scrutiny committee meets today at 10am at County Hall, Oxford.

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Worcester

InBRIEF

Sara on the 'power' list

■ SARA Thornton, the Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police, has been named as the 18th most powerful woman in the UK. She was named in a list compiled by BBC Radio 4's *Woman's Hour*.



Thames Valley Chief Constable Sara Thornton

Her Majesty The Queen headed the list. According to figures compiled by the BBC, women occupy, on average, 30.9 per cent of the most senior positions across 11 key sectors analysed – including business, politics, the judiciary and policing.



ABOVE, LEFT: The Feathers Hotel, now demolished. Painted in 1960. ABOVE, CENTRE: Cornhill Stores. ABOVE, RIGHT: The south side of the Market Place in 1981

Paintings that capture town's historic past



A 1961 sketch of the west side of Market Place

THE work of a Banbury artist who died aged 104 and painted the town's historical buildings is on show at Banbury museum.

Maurice Draper, who died in 2011, painted scenes of Banbury for more than 50 years.

The work of the former science teacher at Banbury Grammar School shows many buildings that no longer exist in

the town. Cherwell District Council deputy leader George Reynolds said: "This exhibition is sure to trigger lots of memories."

"It's a reminder that if you look up, above the modern shop-fronts in Banbury's old streets, you are often rewarded with a sight of fascinating historical architecture."

The exhibition runs until April 27 and is free.

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LEFT: The Midland Hotel, sketched in 1983. ABOVE: The west side of Banbury Market Place, painted in 1961. BELOW, RIGHT: Banbury Cross and the parish church in 1972



Artist Maurice Draper

LEFT: Dale Johnston takes a closer look at some of Maurice Draper's detailed sketches for his paintings of Banbury town centre

OX57435

InCOURT

Verdicts from around the county's magistrates courts

■ **AMY WILLEY**, 29, of Red Poll Close, Banbury, admitted stealing three bottles of Champagne worth £81.97 from a Co-operative shop in Chatsworth Drive, Banbury, on August 13 last year. Given conditional discharge for 12 months and told to pay £81.97 compensation.

■ **JAROSLAW MILEK**, 44, of no fixed abode, admitted stealing a pair of jeans worth £65 from Debenhams in Castle Quay, in Banbury, on December 7 last year and failing to surrender to Banbury Magistrates' Court on January 9 this year. Given six-month conditional discharge and told to pay victims' surcharge of £15.

■ **GARETH ALDERMAN**, 22, of East Street, Banbury, admitted producing cannabis, a Class-B drug, at his home on December 22 last year. He was fined £110 and told to pay a £20 victims' surcharge. Also sentenced for stealing a Makita drill worth £239 on May 4 last year. Fined £75.

■ **SIMON READ**, 22, of Bull Baulk, Middleton Cheney, admitted drink-driving in Gatteridge Street, Banbury, on December 23 last year. Fined £360 and told to pay £36 victims' surcharge and £85 costs. Given 20-month driving ban.

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■ Householders urged to join collective, so power prices can be negotiated

Teaming up to cut those energy bills

A COLLECTIVE buying scheme is set to be launched in parts of Oxfordshire that could save households up to £200 off their electricity bill.

People are being urged to sign up for the initiative. It would be run by firm iChoosr, which negotiates a deal on behalf of large groups of residents.

The move, called the Better

Together campaign, is being supported by Cherwell and West Oxfordshire district councils.

People are being asked to register an interest before April 8. The first mass negotiation will take place in April.

Organiser iChoosr is behind similar successful schemes in Holland and Belgium.

Andy Bowe, of Cherwell District Council's Eco Bicester project, said: "We estimate people can save £200 a year on their electric bill, so it's a community benefit.

"There is a six-week registration period to see how many people are interested. We are trying to get more

By Sam McGregor

people to do it as it brings people together to get the best deal."

He said if the scheme was successful, it could be used to negotiate better deals for other services, such as insurance or mobile telephones.

Mr Bowe said: "It could be a big shift in the way people buy services. It's all about saving money on energy bills and tackling fuel poverty."

Gabi Kaiser, services development manager at Cherwell who is heading up the project on behalf of both councils, said: "By joining forces we're a better customer for the energy company.

"We offer them a whole host of households to supply, and with more likely custom, they offer a more competitive price."

By registering, people are not under any obligation to change supplier, but will be given rates to compare with their current bill.

Figures provided by Oxfordshire

Waste Partnership show gas and electricity costs have doubled since 2004, when the average household bill was £600 compared with £1,310 in 2012.

David Harvey, environment chief at West Oxfordshire District Council, said: "We have been piloting a scheme for buying oil which has been done by Oxfordshire Rural Community Council and has been immensely successful.

"It made us think, if we can do it for oil, we can do it for gas and electricity."

Nigel Morris, Cherwell's executive member for energy and climate change, said: "With spiralling energy costs and fuel poverty becoming an increasing problem, we felt it was important for the council to step in and help.

"We hope that with our support, energy customers in Oxfordshire will end up with cheaper bills by signing up to the Better Together campaign."

People can register online at bettertogether.oxfordshire.co.uk or call 0800 107 0044.



Energy collective: Councillor Nigel Morris with Sam Thomas, Paul Mocroft, Charlotte Smith, Tracey Addison, Gabi Kaiser and Michael Dale OX57345

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Giving tourism a boost

■ **Big Day Out** is planned to hand out free tickets and give the county's economy a kick-start for this year

THE first celebration of tourism across Oxfordshire is to be held in a bid to boost the county's economy.

Visit Oxfordshire has organised its first "Big Day Out", which will be staged next month.

It will give hundreds of people the opportunity to visit some of Oxfordshire's most well-known attractions free of charge.

Hundreds of free tickets will be available via a draw on the Visit Oxfordshire website.

But hurry, as the prize draw closes next Wednesday.

The Sunday, March 17, event is

By Damian Fantato

timed to coincide with English Tourism Week. Oxford alone attracts nine million visitors each year. Together, they bring £1.7bn to the county – more than ten per cent of its economy.

So far, 18 tours and attractions have offered free tickets, including Blenheim Palace, Sulgrave Manor and Christ Church.

Waterperry Gardens, the Oxford Botanic Garden, Didcot Railway Centre, Oxford Castle Unlocked, and the Ashmolean Museum are also involved.

Head of the county's tourism and marketing, Jo Butler, said: "We would like to encourage our local residents to visit for the first time – or to revisit – some of the wonderful attractions, stately homes, museums and other places of interest in this rich and diverse county."

"There will also be an opportunity to take a variety of tours – some by bike, some on foot, and some even



to improve your photographic skills."

Blenheim Palace spokesman Hannah Payne said: "We are hoping to really push tourism in Oxfordshire this year."

"On that weekend we will have our exhibition about all of the filming which has taken place at the palace over the years and we will have Inspector Morse's Jaguar as well."

"We are hoping the palace will be

hugely busy and we will be talking to all of the local hotels and accommodation providers so they know what's going on here."

Tickets that have been won will be available for collection from the Oxford Visitor Information Centre, in Broad Street, Oxford, from Friday, March 1.

● For more information see visitoxfordshire.org



ABOVE: Sulgrave Manor. LEFT: Blenheim Palace. BELOW: Christ Church



The county's head of tourism, Jo Butler



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Admission rules under the spotlight Academies to use their newly acquired powers



Banbury Academy
executive
principal
Fiona
Hammans

ACADEMY schools are seizing powers to change admissions rules.

Among these are plans to include entry tests for new pupils, and the ability to give greater priority to children of staff members.

Already two county secondary schools have announced plans to change admissions criteria, using new powers given under academy status.

Banbury Academy will have prospective pupils sit a test and prioritise two primaries, while Wallingford School would give more priority to staff children.

Headteachers said the changes would give them more scope to make improvements – but both a leading school principal and a union warned of the changes leading to “selection”.

There are currently 26 county academies, out of 275 state primary and secondary schools. A further 16 schools have already lined up, wanting to convert too.

Pupils who want to attend Banbury Academy – formerly Banbury School – will have to take a literacy test for a September 2014 entry.

A set number of places will then be allocated to three ability bands – set nationally – in a bid to keep it “fully comprehensive”.

This will help it keep places for the less able, as more “advantaged” youngsters are expected to arrive by the time the planned 1,000-home Banks estate is completed, said executive principal Dr Fiona Hammans.

She added: “If you look at any highly-popular school, the sharp-elbowed middle classes will find

By Oliver Evans

their way into the school they want.

“We want to make sure that we maintain a truly comprehensive school, and the first way to do that is to have literacy testing.”

Pupils at Dashwood and Harriers academy primaries – part of the sponsor trust it belongs to – will get priority over other primaries under the plans.

The school is under-subscribed at the moment, but the changes could affect pupils if demand exceeds places.

Meanwhile, Wallingford School wants to give priority to the children of staff, who have been working at the school for more than two years, over catchment-area children and those with siblings at the school.

Headteacher Nigel Willis said he would be “surprised” if this change took away more than ten places a



Sue Croft

year, while having the bonus of attracting and retaining staff.

He said: “We sometimes lose talented teachers and I think we need to have a better chance of retaining them.”

Teachers at the school – which is over-subscribed most years – will also have a “vested interest” in its success, he said.

But Oxford Spire Academy principal Sue Croft raised concerns.

The school still runs its admissions through Oxfordshire County Council, which manages admissions for non-academies.

She said: “Admissions are complex. It needs to be centrally organised to remain fair.

“Anything that you do that changes the criteria is a form of selection. Our job is to be a service to the whole community.”

And Ed Finch, spokesman for the Oxfordshire branch of the National Union of Teachers, said that testing for “selection purposes would look like the thin end of a very dangerous wedge”.

Giving more priority to staff children “would not be good for relationships between families and schools,” he added.

The county’s education chief, Melinda Tilley, said she supported schools’ rights to become academies and set admission policy.

She said: “It is really up to the school. We don’t have any control over it.”

Academies must still abide by the School Admissions Code, which has minimum standards such as giving priority to children in care.

Banbury Academy and Wallingford School are still consulting over their proposals.

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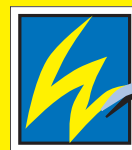


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■ Survey staged to see how light pollution is creeping accross the county

Stargazers tell of the vanishing dark night skies

GAZE up at the stars and enjoy the night sky while you still can, light-pollution campaigners have warned.

Star Count Week 2013 was being organised this month by the Campaign to Protect Rural England and the British Astronomical Association's Campaign for Dark Skies.

Families across Oxfordshire were asked to stare up at the night, count the stars in the sky and plot them on an online map.

The project was to monitor light pollution caused by security lights, floodlights and street lights.

And CPRE Oxfordshire has warned that anyone living in Oxfordshire was likely to be in for a shock, as

By Mark Taylor

there are now few truly dark nights.

Spokesman Jane Tomlinson said: "It's such a shame, but it is a dying phenomenon in Oxfordshire to see a truly dark night. Unless you live in a village without street lights, you will rarely get a real dark night."

"People are starting to notice the creep from light covering up the stars. Anyone who lives near an industrial area or floodlit area will really notice the creep from light pollution. Over the last 20 years it has got so bad that there is virtually nowhere you can see a dark sky."

Those who took part in the 2013

Star Count, simply went out after dark and counted the number of stars that could be seen within the four corner points of the Orion constellation.

The easiest way to find Orion was to look in the southwest sky, the same direction that household satellite dishes face, for three bright stars close together in an almost-straight line. These three stars represent Orion's belt.

Seeing more than 30 stars within Orion means dark skies; fewer than ten indicates severe light pollution.

Results from last year's event showed that 60 per cent of people across the UK were living with severe light pollution.



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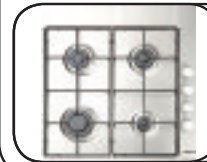
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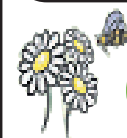
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There's some great stuff planned for the next few months too, here are just a few of the highlights!

Every Wednesday night from 8.30pm is the Dale Collins Fun Quiz, only £2 per person to enter for a great night, not to mention the chance of winning some money, only a



all the games in HD. Monday 26th we are pleased to be hosting "At Home With Jamie", a great chance to own your very own range of cookware from Jamie Oliver as well as a chance to meet others with a glass a wine! 10th March is Mothering Sunday, pre-book before the 4th and we will knock off £1.50 of 3 courses and Mum will get a free bottle of fizz!

Sunday 17th March is St Patrick's day, come and join us for some good old Irish Craic! And at the end of April, we are having a week-long celebration of our very own Patron saint, St George ending with a three day English Beer Festival on Thursday 25th April until Saturday 27th.

All these events with more details can be found on our Facebook page:

couple of weeks ago a <http://www.facebook.com/pages/team-left-with-£100,-last-The-White-Horse-at-Banbury-week-a-solo-winner-of-Cross/108921229240196> £20, there is currently or our website: www.whitehorsebanbury.co.uk just under £400 in the co.uk

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Mill scores music and laughs

They bear the intriguing name Mr Cat and The Jackal but they are no meek duo. This unique five-piece band brings Banbury a wholly new music fusion on Sunday (February 24).

Mr Cat is a multi-instrumental group often described as 'experimental acoustic folk' that also explores blues, tango, pirate, Balkan and Irish themes.

"This is Mr Cat and The Jackal's first appearance at The Mill and we're hoping to give them a great welcome," said Deborah Clarke, the centre's programme manager.

"They're an exciting band – five talented musicians who create a circus of sounds on a collection of foreign and handmade instruments. Their performance is described as a theatrical experience and we're offering them the perfect venue. Now we need the audience to give them the appreciation they deserve!"

The band formed in 2006 and initially was devoted to writing scores for theatre productions – which perhaps explains the dramatic nature of performances.

Since their 2007 album *Themes and Variations* Mr Cat and The Jackal have toured their native South Africa repeatedly and have kept refining their instruments, style and the music. A second album, *Sins Siren Song*, released in 2011, received rave reviews.

Mr Cat and The Jackal have been described as 'mysteriously

gorgeous, fresh, raw and exciting'. They are five, self-confessed ruffians who play between them more than 30 instruments, all home-fashioned and among them a saw!

■ **Mr Cat and The Jackal, The Mill, Banbury, Sunday, February 24, 7pm. Tickets £10. Call 01295 279002.**

A group of Banbury knitting fanatics have added the finishing touches to a comedy Swedish thriller at The Mill next Thursday (February 28).

Banbury Busy Fingers members have knitted a collection of leaves and a fabulous Nordic jumper as part of the flavour-setting atmosphere at the Spiceball Park theatre where the hit comedy duo Lip Service present their hilarious new show.

Using the huge popularity of the Swedish crime programmes on TV (*Wallander*, *The Killing* and *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*) Lip Service have extracted the best elements and turned them into a hugely funny evening's entertainment.

And of course none of it would be 'authentic' without those trusty, rustic, knitted jumpers!

"*Inspector Norse* is a finger-on-the-pulse celebration of our current love affair with all things Scandi, from *The Killing* and Stieg Larsson to shopping at IKEA, ABBA and of course fabulous knitwear," said The Mill's Deborah Clarke.

"Lip Service celebrate 25 years



this year and the shows they have brought to The Mill in the past have been very successful.

"We think this one is going to be more witty and inventive than ever."

The story begins when ex-pop star, recluse Freya Johansson discovers a body in her remote farmhouse barn. Enter our heroine, the introverted, monosyllabic DI Larsson in her iconic knitted jumper. She and her cop partner Erik uncover a disturbing mystery involving a famous 1970s Swedish pop band.

As the body count mounts and the only suspect is a troll, Sandra and Erik go undercover...

■ **Inspector Norse, The Mill, Banbury, Thursday February 28, 7.30pm. Tickets £12-£14. Call 01295 279002**



PURLS of wisdom: Inspector Norse, left, and Mr Cat and The Jackal

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Nutcracker's childlike glee

Over a century has passed since the enchanting *Nutcracker* was first performed, and through the Moscow City Ballet it continues to capture the magic of even the modern childhood.

The curtains lifted at The Royal and Derngate in Northampton – and there came a surprise; the excitement and childlike energy in a room of people waiting to be taken back to a time when they still believed in fairies.

Tchaikovsky's initial overture is so playful that the orchestra immediately absorbed the audience and the performers transfixed us with their physical springs and glides that sprinkled us with a beautiful sense of nostalgia.

The enormous Christmas tree brought a sense of Siberian forestry. Each present grew bigger and more sparkling than any of the children dared to dream, and the parents moved in elegant unison, depicting the ideal mixture of authority, wisdom, and kindness. None of the harsh and



sinister realities of adult life could seep into this picture. No sex, nor jealousy, hate, or spite. Everything moved like clockwork as the time hypnotically passed.

But of course like all stories, darkness enters. The most vivid image continues to haunt me: a family of deprived and crooked mice dart their way on to stage. They claw at the toy soldiers with menacing accord, only to be waltzed and whiskered out by a defeating blow from its protagonist, Clara. As her

Nutcracker Doll transforms into a handsome prince, unknowing if she has found true love or true friendship, her body floats with his lead into the breathtaking Palace of the Sugar Plum Fairy.

This show charmed and delighted me, reminding me of how the world can be when our imaginations and fantasies are allowed space to run free.

by Ricky Murphy

■ Visit roh.org.uk for details of more Moscow City Ballet productions on tour.

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TWO'S COMPANY

21/02/2013



Woman seeking man

SPONTANEOUS Upfront Witney lady, 37, 5'6", blue-eyes, long-hair, size 10-12, late-evening out, cinema, enjoys evenings out, acquaintances, walks, shopping, looking for a traditional gent, 35+. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 131986

GOOD COMPANIONSHIP Happy-go-lucky Devizes female, 41, good sense of humour, looking for a reliable, caring man, for a long term relationship. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 136646 or send a text to 80360

ENJOY AND SHARE LIFE Attractive Witney lady, 37, 5'6", blonde hair/green eyes, loves the outdoors, travel, animals, family life, seeking a genuine guy, 40-50, for a true romance. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 138266 or send a text to 80360

OF A GENUINE DESCRIPTION Laid-back Swindon female, 46, still looking for my Mr Right, to share and enjoy life with. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 126129

IT COULD BE US Spiritual, genuine Didcot woman, 46, attractive, fun, have grown up children, likes clubs, cafes, music, films, walking and reading, seeking a caring and optimistic man, for friendship first. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 132828 or send a text to 80360

RIGHT HERE WAITING Quiet, rational and sincere Wellingford woman, 48, 5'5", would like a date with an aware, intuitive gent, for happiness, love and laughter. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 136967 or send a text to 80360

SMOOTH MOVE Slim, blue-eyed Wellingford female, 48, 5'2", GSOH, easy to get on with, enjoys nights out, walks and more, interesting man. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 109958 or send a text to 80360

LOST FOR WORDS Swindon girl, 49, enjoys socialising, skiing, badminton and more, searching for a down to earth man. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 108304

GIVE IT A WHIRL Sincere Witney female, 50, own flat & car, enjoys walks, cinema, cycling, pubs, meals out, seeking a nice guy, to share and enjoy life with. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 138872 or send a text to 80360

START LIVING AGAIN Friendly, fun Oxfordshire divorced mum, 51, 5'2", grown up children, looking for love again and someone to share life with. Is the right man out there for me? Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 798804

VA VA VOOM Positive, lovable and kind-hearted woman, #HAGe#, would like to meet a vivacious, self-assured male, for love and an exciting future together. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 135186

SOMEONE EXACTLY LIKE YOU Caring, lovely, bubbly Bicester lady, 53, looking for a tall, kind, caring and romantic man for a lasting loving relationship. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 118921 or send a text to 80360

RESTORE MY FAITH Family orientated, honest, trustworthy and caring Oxford woman, 53, looking for a genuine sincere guy, with a good sense of humour, to share good times with. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 116101

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TO THE FUTURE Flexible, life-loving, optimistic, divorced Abingdon lady, 53, 5'7", non-smoker, wants to meet a feisty, adventurous gentleman, 44-54 for friendship, hopefully leading to committed relationship. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 138484

A NEW LIFE Truthful, gracious and protective Wellingford girl, 54, 5'8", looking to find a truthful, sophisticated gent, to share and enjoy life with. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 137082

SIMPLE TASTES Open, honest Bampton female, 55, enjoys country walks, gardening, swimming, theatre, travelling, would like to meet that special man, to enjoy life with. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 136810 or send a text to 80360

THAT SPECIAL PERSON Honest, bubbly female, 55, kind, loving, seeks 6ft+ male, for romance, companionship & lots more. Bicester. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 110670

RECIPE FOR LOVE Kind hearted, sociable Oxford lady, 57, active, caring, GSOH, enjoys rock concerts, seasides, animals and driving, searching for a warm, loving and funny gent, for company, sharing and maybe more. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 130132 or send a text to 80360

HERE TO FIND YOU Down-to-earth Swindon female, 65, works part-time, likes reading, walks, cinema, meals out, seeks a male, for good times and more. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 138463

THE BETTER THINGS IN LIFE Divorced Swindon female, 65, 5'5", works part-time, likes walking, travelling and cooking, would like to meet a nice sociable gent, with a good lifestyle, to enjoy life with. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 114628

HAPPIER DAYS Kind-hearted, homely and sensitive Didcot woman, 70, would like a date with a lovable, kind-hearted guy, for friendship and maybe more. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 136207 or send a text to 80360

ADVENTURE AHEAD Warm, friendly Witney woman, 71, GSOH, youthful, attractive, likes dancing, walking, music, theatre, reading and meals out, seeking a tall, active and fun gentleman, for company and more. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 123334

WHERE ARE YOU? Friendly, Chippingham blonde widow, 73, practical, easy to get along with person, told I'm attractive, seeking a nice life that we can share together. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 138618

CLOSE TO HAPPINESS Cuddly, young looking 58yr old Salisbury woman, likes travel, reading crime thrillers, all kinds of music, looking for a rugged man to make me smile & share fun times together. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 119145

LIFE STARTS HERE Bubbly, attractive Witney female, 59, slim build, 5'5", sociable, enjoys nights out, conversation, days away and cosy nights in, seeking a funny and intelligent male, for company and more. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 134011

SEEKING THE RIGHT MAN Separated, attractive Witney female, 60, 5'2", curvy, likes cooking, evenings in/out and much more, seeks friendly male, to enjoy life with. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 128289 or send a text to 80360

THE LONG TERM Separated, easygoing Oxon female, 60, likes cooking, evenings in/out and much more, seeks friendly male, to enjoy life with. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 100451

LOVE IS FOR SHARING Easygoing, sincere Trowbridge lady, 60, med build, 5'6", GSOH, N/5, enjoys good social life, dance, music, walking & reading, searching for that special guy, N/5 and caring for dates & more. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 116161

OPEN YOUR HEART Slim, attractive Swindon widow, 61, 5'4", enjoys walks, sports, travel, country pubs and socialising, seeking a similar male, to share interests together. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 125012 or send a text to 80360

GENUINE AND CARING Oxfordshire widow, 61, 5'6", slender build, sociable, caring and well-travelled, searching for a genuine, professional guy, non-smoker, for friendship, maybe lasting love. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 466487

FRIENDSHIP, MAYBE MORE... Sociable, active Witney woman, 63, GSOH, widow, attractive, likes meeting people, theatre, drinks, meals out and walking, seeking a similar man, caring and genuine, for friendship and maybe more. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 127066

CHATS OVER A PINT? Country woman looking to meet a loving dark haired, slim man, I'm 64yrs old, 5'7", slim and fit, love being outside, walking and gardening. Marlborough/Wiltshire Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 112241 or send a text to 80360

HONEST RELATIONSHIP Non-smoking Bradford lady, 65, 5'5", slim-build, blue-eyes with a positive outlook, enjoy countryside, dancing, music, theatre, seeking a gent, 65-68, to enjoy similar interests. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 128404 or send a text to 80360

HERE TO FIND YOU Down-to-earth Swindon female, 65, works part-time, likes reading, walks, cinema, meals out, seeks a male, for good times and more. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 138463

THE BETTER THINGS IN LIFE Divorced Swindon female, 65, 5'5", works part-time, likes walking, travelling and cooking, would like to meet a nice sociable gent, with a good lifestyle, to enjoy life with. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 114628

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THE LONG TERM Separated, easygoing Oxon female, 60, likes cooking, evenings in/out and much more, seeks friendly male, to enjoy life with. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 100451

LOVE IS FOR SHARING Easygoing, sincere Trowbridge lady, 60, med build, 5'6", GSOH, N/5, enjoys good social life, dance, music, walking & reading, searching for that special guy, N/5 and caring for dates & more. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 116161

FRIENDSHIP & ROMANCE Genuine, active Oxford male, 28, slim build, 5'7", caring, enjoys the gym, cycling and generally keeping fit, would like to meet a similar female, honest, GSOH and fun, for friendship and love. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 122943

WE COULD BE GOOD TOGETHER Down to earth Swindon male, 37, enjoys cycling, walks, travel and lots more, seeks laid back female, for good times and more. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 100773

PLENTY OF TLC Loving male, 40, 5'7", usual interests, from Didcot, looking for love and romance. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 111253

READY TO MEET MY SOULMATE Outgoing, sociable Oxford male, 41, black, GSOH, caring, enjoys living life to the full and would like to share it with a bubbly, attractive and kind female, for a loving relationship. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 127095

TAKE HANDS Slim, tall Oxfordshire male, 43, N/5, musician and artist, searching for his perfect woman, to make life complete. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 108016

SHARE THE MOMENT Friendly, lovely and sincere Oxford gent, 44, 5'10", wants to meet a homely, sensible woman, for good times and great company. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 134382 or send a text to 80360

ENJOY GOOD COMPANY Honest male, 44, 6'3", stocky build, gosh, enjoys sports, travel, cosy times in, social drinks, seeks fun loving female, for happier times. Oxford. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 101716 or send a text to 80360

COME CLOSER Active, kind-hearted and upbeat Oxford bloke, 46, looking to find an insightful, liberal woman, for fun and maybe a little romance. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 130080

HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL Kind, caring, down-to-earth Thame male, 46, enjoys music, country walks, cooking, reading, films, seeking a kind, sincere, slim female, 25+. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 137427 or send a text to 80360

GET TO THE GOOD TIMES Separated, laid-back Bicester guy, 50, 5'10", brown hair/blue eyes, decent build, self-employed, looking for an attractive woman. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 136282 or send a text to 80360

ACCEPT EACH OTHER Easygoing Wantage male, 51, own car, works full-time, likes most sports, would like to meet an outgoing female, for good times leading to more. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 135164 or send a text to 80360

A FUTURE FILLED WITH LAUGHTER Divorced, young at heart male, 56, own house in Oxford, likes cinema, theatre and clubs, seeks caring female for happy times and more. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 107632

CARING NATURE Dependable, informed and responsible Witney man, 58, 6'5", looking for a helpful, decent woman, to share a brighter future together. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 111595

SHARING GOOD TIMES Upbeat Burford widower, 58, own cars, works full time, likes days in and out, countryside walks, driving, looking for a similar woman for companionship. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 117916 or send a text to 80360

PASSION FLOWING Young-looking Oxford 59yr old chap, 5'9", dark hair, enjoys cinema, bowling, days out and socialising, seeks loving, loyal female, for lasting relationship. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 101122 or send a text to 80360

CONFIDENTLY YOURS Widowed chap, 60, 5'10", own home & business, Witney based, enjoys music, country walks, pubs, fishing, gardening, seeks outgoing female, to enjoy life again. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 107964

LONG LASTING HAPPINESS Fairly fit Banbury man, 60, 5'11", fair-hair, blue-eyes, works as electrician, looking for a nice lady around the same age, for friendship possibly leading to more. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 123584

POSITIVE ATTITUDE Fit Latino male, 61, looking for someone who can share fun, life in general and hopefully love with. Oxford. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 460522

SO GOOD TOGETHER Genuine, easygoing, happy Abingdon male, 62, own home/car, enjoys dancing, days out and walking the dog, searching for a genuine lady, with an attractive and happy nature. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 466085

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READY TO MOVE ON Young, caring Didcot guy, 63, 5'9", enjoys the sea, reading and boating, would like to meet a similar lady for companionship. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 117043

MORE IN TIME Self-employed Witney male, 64, loves cinema, theatre, eating out and more, searching for a serious-minded lady, for a loving and supportive relationship. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 109413 or send a text to 80360

MAKE A FRIEND Warm, romantic Bicester male, 65, searching for an interesting, active woman, for days out, friendship, meals and good company. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 851129

LOVING LIFE Loyal, solvent North Oxfordshire lady, 66, 5'9", loves soul and motown music, coffee and much more, searching for a loving woman, to make life complete. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 456285

VARIOUS INTERESTS Single Oxford vegan, 54, seeking a female, who is looking for a loving, caring relationship. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 138451

NOT TO BE MISSED Spontaneous, caring, hard-working Oxford guy, 54, likes music, cooking, live bands, good wine and F1, would like to meet a simple woman, to share life with. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 115775 or send a text to 80360

LET'S DO IT Upbeat, friendly man, 54, good sense of humour, into most things, travelling, good foods, looking for love and romance. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 110840

TAKE CHARGE Bright, humorous and optimistic Banbury man, 55, would like a date with a chatty, active woman, for good times and great company. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 132836 or send a text to 80360

A FUTURE FILLED WITH LAUGHTER Divorced, young at heart male, 56, own house in Oxford, likes cinema, theatre and clubs, seeks caring female for happy times and more. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 107632

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SHARING GOOD TIMES Upbeat Burford widower, 58, own cars, works full time, likes days in and out, countryside walks, driving, looking for a similar woman for companionship. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 117916 or send a text to 80360

PASSION FLOWING Young-looking Oxford 59yr old chap, 5'9", dark hair, enjoys cinema, bowling, days out and socialising, seeks loving, loyal female, for lasting relationship. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 101122 or send a text to 80360

CONFIDENTLY YOURS Widowed chap, 60, 5'10", own home & business, Witney based, enjoys music, country walks, pubs, fishing, gardening, seeks outgoing female, to enjoy life again. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 107964

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SO GOOD TOGETHER Genuine, easygoing, happy Abingdon male, 62, own home/car, enjoys dancing, days out and walking the dog, searching for a genuine lady, with an attractive and happy nature. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 466085

RARE DISCOVERY Easygoing Thame widower, 67, 6', medium-build, likes gardening, playing golf, the outdoors, would like to meet a nice lady, for a lasting relationship. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 134196

OF A GENUINE DESCRIPTION Fit, clean-shaven Thame gentleman, 67, easygoing, 6ft, active, enjoys gardening, golf, diy and the outdoors, seeking a similar lady, affectionate and fun, for friendship and hopefully love. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 126173

JUST AN ORDINARY GUY Friendly, faithful Didcot male, 67, 5'9", likes rugby, football, DIY, gardening and much more, searching for a loving woman, to make life complete. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 456285



Woman seeking man

MY SPECIAL SOMEONE Hard-working, kind, caring, sporty Witney female, 28, seeking female, 18-40, for friendship, possibly leading to more with a nice, friendly, bubbly woman. Where are you? Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 138469 or send a text to 80360

HOPE THIS WORKS Cuddly Swindon lady, 47, easygoing and fun to be with, looking for friendship leading to more with a nice, friendly, bubbly woman. Where are you? Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 851817

LUCKY CHARM Serious, lovable and imaginative Malmesbury lady, 54, simply searching for an independent, free-thinking girl, for company and lasting relationship. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 134242 or send a text to 80360



Man seeking woman

FIT MAN FOR YOU Oxford male, 40, likes nights out, pubs, clubs, live music, seeks outgoing male, for fun, laughter and more. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 135263 or send a text to 80360

ON THE MENU Attractive Didcot male, 43, 5'10", blond-hair, stocky-build, seeks mature, active gent, 60+, for red wine, fun and friendship. ohac would be nice. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 135675 or send a text to 80360

KING OF MY HEART Liveable, confident Oxford male, 54, would like to meet a mature, active male, for good times and more. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 135675 or send a text to 80360

MAKE A CONNECTION Interesting, friendly Oxford male, 64, varied interests, loves walks, reading, travel and more, seeks sensitive male, similar age, for a loving relationship. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 857624

THAT'S ALL FOR NOW... Easygoing, friendly Didcot male, 65, enjoys walks, theatre, cosy times in, socialising, seeks a friendly, active chap, for company and more. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 131800 or send a text to 80360

LET'S EXPLORE Abingdon male, 69, 5'9", medium build, easygoing and affectionate, looking for someone similar, to share fun and good times. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 455567 or send a text to 80360

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STILL SEARCHING FOR YOU Youthful, solvent, active, retired businessman, 66, 5'9", 11st, own house & car, loves music, places of interest, experiencing the new, seeks a loving, feminine woman, 50-70, to share a warmth. Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 132140

LET'S SHARE THE GOOD THINGS Well preserved male, 67, 5'10", adequate intelligence, passively handsome, active, inquisitive, liberal outlook, loving bright, youthful lady for wlm relationship and interesting times. Witney Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 108871

NOT JUST ANYONE Quiet, caring Oxford man, 72, 5'10", looking for a sensitive, calm, liberal female, for

Fantasy tale of witches and love casts a spell

BEAUTIFUL CREATURES (12A, 124 mins) Fantasy/Romance/Drama. Alden Ehrenreich, Alice Englert, Jeremy Irons, Viola Davis, Emmy Rossum, Thomas Mann, Emma Thompson, Eileen Atkins. Director: Richard LaGravenese.

Based on the first book in the *Caster Chronicles* series by Kami Garcia and Margaret Stohl, *Beautiful Creatures* is the film that *Twilight* yearned to be.

Smart, sassy and entertainingly camp, Richard LaGravenese's supernatural love story is a guilty pleasure riddled with teen angst, mystical curses and ridiculous plot twists as it plays out the forbidden romance of a mortal boy and an enchanted girl.

Here, we're spared posting vampires and bare-chested werewolves, and plunged instead into the choking kudzu of South Carolina, where witches – or Casters as they prefer to be called – stare mournfully from magnificent Gothic mansions.

LaGravenese marshals an impressive cast to lend gravitas to peripheral adult roles.

Oscar winners Jeremy Irons and Emma Thompson engage in a private battle to determine who can chew the most scenery in limited screen time.

The London-born actress triumphs in their pivotal showdown, slinking like a wild cat as she whoops, cackles and tousles her hair with villainous glee.

Subtlety packs its bags and heads out of town early in LaGravenese's

script, which labours heavily on the bogus hocus-pocus and hammers home every plot development.

So, when the accursed heroine puts the safety of the people she loves before her own happiness, the film cuts to the town's pastor delivering a heartfelt sermon on the theme of sacrifice.

We get it.

Seventeen-year-old Ethan Wate (Alden Ehrenreich) is itching to escape the backwater of Gatlin for the big city.

"It's South Carolina's least famous middle of nowhere," he drawls in voiceover.

His restlessness is soothed by the arrival of Lena Duchannes (Alice Englert), the enigmatic niece of reclusive landowner Macon Ravenwood (Jeremy Irons).

She looks exactly like the girl who has been haunting Ethan's dreams and it takes no time for the love-struck lad to fall for her sullen charms.

Alas, Lena is reluctant to let Ethan into her life because she is a Caster and on her forthcoming 16th birthday she must take part in a ritual known as the Claiming, which will dictate whether she is destined to use her powers for good or evil.

A burgeoning attraction to Ethan – a mortal – is forbidden but Lena cannot resist his goofy grin, despite dire warnings from Bible-bashing busybody Mrs Lincoln (Emma Thompson) and town librarian Amma (Viola Davis).

Beautiful Creatures is an effervescent opening salvo, peppered with snappy dialogue:



A scene from the fantasy drama, *Beautiful Creatures*

"That was a dead end conversation on a road to nowhere. I must have missed the exit to fascinating."

Ehrenreich and Englert are an attractive and sweetly innocent central pairing, playing their roles straight, while co-stars ham it up a treat.

Some of the digital effects are admittedly unconvincing and every twist is telegraphed in advance.

Yet, for all its predictability and contrivance, as soapy, teen-friendly fare, LaGravenese's film casts a spell.



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CakeWhat's on

Music

SATURDAY: The Theatre, Spring Street, Chipping Norton:
Fleetwood Mac - Fleetwood Mac tribute band. £15, concession £13. 7.45pm. 01608 642350

Theatre

The Mill Arts Centre, Spiceball Park, Banbury:

Feb 21, Jenny Eclair, *Eclairious*. Stand up show. 7.30pm. £17.50.
Feb 22, Limehouse Lizzy. Tribute band. 8.3pm. Standing event. £15.

Feb 23, Mr Cat and The Jackel. A unique five-piece multi-instrumental group often described as experimental acoustic folk whilst exploring blues, tango, pirate, Balkan and Irish themes. 'A totally awesome South African band. 7pm. £10.

Feb 23, *Snow Play*. Lyngo Theatre's interactive show 'Snow Play' had a sell-out run at the Lyric Hammersmith this Christmas! When Mr Green comes back from holiday to find Mr White in his house it's the start of a brrrrilliant

series of adventures. For 3-7yrs. £6, family £22. 2pm.
Box office: 01295 279002.

The Theatre, Spring Street, Chipping Norton:

Feb 21, *An Audience with the Duke of Windsor*. A new stage play telling the behind-the-scenes story of Edward, Duke of Windsor, and the relationship with his ghost writer as they attempt to write his memoir. £13, concession £11. 7.45pm.

Feb 25-26, *If It's Wednesday It Must Be Yoga*. The Youth Theatre (ages 9-14) showcase what they have worked on during their sessions. Take Part Productions. A series of public performances drawing on the work of the Youth Theatre members. £5, conc £3. 7.30pm.
Box office: 01608 642350

Events

SATURDAY

Jumble sale: Primary School, Acre Ditch, Sibford Gower. £1 entry and refreshments available. Toys, Bric-a-brac, dvds, clothes, books, cd's and records etc! 10am

to noon. 01295 780270.

SUNDAY

Train spotting: Buckinghamshire Railway Centre, Quainton Road Station, Quainton. Welcoming back locomotive Metropolitan No. 1 after her triumphant return to London's Underground System. You can ride behind the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre's newly restored locomotive Metropolitan No. 1 her, hauling former Metropolitan Railway Dreadnought Carriage 465 for rides. 10.30am-4.30pm. £10, senior £9, 5-15yrs £7. 01296 655720.

MONDAY

Acupuncture Awareness Week Consultation Day: Central Oxford Osteopathy, 23 Park End Street, Oxford. A day of consultations where you can get answers to all your questions. As part of the session you can have your tongue diagnosed and find out whether your health issues can benefit from acupuncture. Free. 10am-6pm. 07912 936 222.

CakeSport

banburycake.co.uk/sport

Banbury's
Warren
Carter had
a busy
time on
Saturday



Four-goal blow floors Puritans

BANBURY United had no answer to Hitchin's in-form striker John Frendo, who scored his second hat-trick in as many Premier Division games on Saturday.

This was the second successive home game in which the Puritans had conceded four goals.

Frendo needed his first past helpless keeper Warren Carter in the 34th minute, and five minutes later headed in the second from a corner.

Banbury, rallied at the start of the second half, with Scott Bridges shooting straight at the keeper from Michael Hopkins's cross.

But the game was effectively over

Banbury Utd 0
Hitchin Tn 4
(Frendo 34, 39, 63, Gregson 61)

when the unmarked Luke Gregson headed in No 3 for Hitchin.

Banbury's embarrassment was completed two minutes later when Frendo completed his hat-trick.

Banbury Utd: Carter, Cray, Martin, Ashton (Agyeman-Prempeh 75), Allen, Plowright, Scott Bridges, Bailey (Lait 65), Shariff (Skendi 65), Isaac, Hopkins. Subs not used: Plowright, Blossom.

Attendance: 216.



Scott Bridges, of Banbury, who was denied a consolation goal

EVO-STIK SOUTHERN LEAGUE

	Premier Division									
	P	W	D	L	A	F	A	Pts		
Leamington	27	19	3	5	54	34	60	60		
H Hempstead	29	17	4	8	71	43	55			
Stourbridge	29	14	7	8	60	32	49			
Barwell	28	14	7	7	52	34	49			
Cambridge C	27	15	3	9	42	32	48			
Gosport	29	12	11	6	50	31	47			
St Albans	28	13	5	10	55	46	44			
Totton	30	13	5	12	52	51	44			
Weymouth	30	12	7	11	44	53	43			
Bedford	28	12	6	10	38	33	42			
Arlesey	24	11	4	9	35	32	37			
St Neots	29	11	4	14	58	37				
Chesham	27	9	9	9	43	41	36			
Banbury Utd	29	10	6	13	43	54	36			
Bideford	27	9	5	13	46	52	32			
Chippenhams	29	7	10	12	35	44	31			
Frome	28	7	9	12	27	36	30			
Bashley	26	8	5	13	28	40	29			
Hitchin	26	8	4	14	40	48	28			
Bedworth	26	7	5	14	25	47	26			
Redditch	24	7	4	13	21	40	25			
*Kettering	26	4	5	17	24	62	7			

*10pts deducted

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ARIES

Mar 21-Apr 19

Venus makes it hard for you not to show your true feelings. You think this is a bad thing but it's actually going to be a blessing in disguise. It's time you confessed what and who you really want, don't you think? The chance to try your hand at something new in your career could well spark a new path for your future. Ring me now to hear why this is such a constructive period for you.

0906 585 4360

LIBRA

Sep 23-Oct 22

You feel as if you're being railroaded into things you don't want to do, but have you actually managed to say the word no? Careful you're not giving off the impression that you don't mind what others are trying to make you to do, or you could end up in a pickle of your own making. Opportunities to make new friends require that you accept their invites. Call now for insight.

0906 585 4366

TAURUS

Apr 20-May 20

If you can set your inhibitions to one side then you'll get the chance to find out who your real admirer is. You've been too busy so far this year analysing rather than actually feeling what's happening to you. Travel plans you make in the name of family give you a firmer sense of where you're going in life. Give me a call now to hear who could do with your time this week.

0906 585 4361

SCORPIO

Oct 23-Nov 21

You had quite a year last year, didn't you my friend? You don't realise it but you handled it so well and what you've been through will only make the success forecast for you this year all the sweeter. Don't let well meaning but naive friends talk you into telling needless lies. Stick to truths if you want to keep support in the months ahead. Ring me now for more on this exciting time.

0906 585 4367

GEMINI

May 21-Jun 20

This is the week you get to find out what is really going on in a close one's life. I can't say if you'll like it or loathe it but I can tell you that you'll feel as if a weight has been lifted off your shoulders. Too many people are influencing you on what is only really a decision for two. Think what you want out of life and not what others think is right for you. Phone now for a confidence boost.

0906 585 4362

SAGITTARIUS

Nov 22-Dec 21

The media is strongly signified and what you do this week seems to have a hint of excitement and glamour to it. Just make sure you are not spending money you don't have just to impress those around you. An attraction with an age gap makes you stop and question what you want from life. Ask yourself rather than your friends. After all you have to live with your decision. Ring now to reveal more.

0906 585 4368

CANCER

Jun 21-Jul 22

You seem to be going back to the role of student this month. Part of you is enjoying new challenges but the other part feels as if they're taking a step back. This is not so. You can't go forward without working out which path leads you to the destination you desire. Distance yourself from the signs you know just bring you down. You're wise now, aren't you? Phone now to reveal your future.

0906 585 4363

CAPRICORN

Dec 22-Jan 19

There is much open to you romantically this week. All you've got to do is take notice. The truth with earth signs such as you is that you are the last one that sees the opportunities for yourself but the first one to notice them for others. Think of your problems as friends and you'll soon see the answers to your worries. Ring me now for the low down on love and romance.

0906 585 4369

LEO

Jul 23-Aug 22

Don't take the first offers that come your way. The stars show there are several others worth looking at. You've been seeking advice from those whose lives you would not wish for your own. Surely it is best to consult the person it would most affect? You don't be afraid to admit your true feelings, it's how you'll learn the art of happiness. Call now to make yourself a priority.

0906 585 4364

AQUARIUS

Jan 20-Feb 18

You can't change the past but you can change how you handle the present and future. By admitting a failing you had you can learn how to ensure that the same mistakes don't happen again. An attraction with an age gap makes you stop and question what you want from life. Ask yourself rather than your friends. After all you have to live with your decision. Ring now to reveal more.

0906 585 4370

VIRGO

Aug 23-Sep 22

Friends can keep your secrets but for how long? At some stage you've got to ask yourself how you're going to address the inevitable questions which will be coming your way. Events on Thursday may force you to admit part of what you're trying to hide anyway. Hold your head up high. If you have confidence in your decisions, others will too. Call now so I can tell you your future.

0906 585 4365

PISCES

Feb 19-Mar 20

I can see that you've had a lot to put up with so far this year but I can also see that you're a little angry at certain things in life. Try to blow off some steam before you blow up at someone who doesn't deserve it. Visits to places you haven't been to before spark an interest in a move which could open up an exciting chapter of your life. Ring now for a full reading.

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A lovely two bedroom bungalow with garage and garden in quiet village location. Available April.

Middleton Road - £675 pcm



A two bedroom ground floor flat in the centre of town. Secure gated parking. Available 4th April unfurnished.

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Sibford Gower - £825 pcm



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SSTC

SSTC

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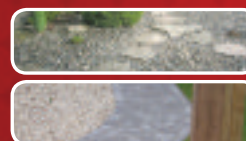
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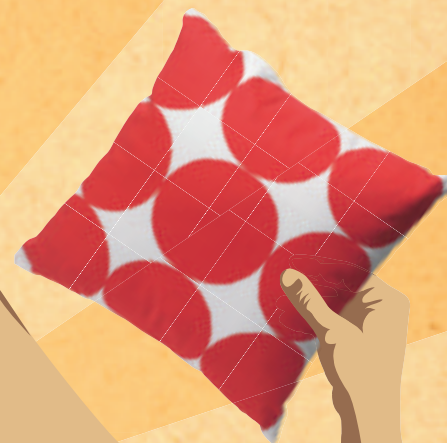
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